

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended to 4 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN RESTORATION ACT

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I rise today to thank my Senate colleagues.

Yesterday, we passed a reauthorization of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Act. That is very significant for my State of Louisiana, particularly southeast Louisiana. Today I expect that package will be similarly approved by the U.S. House and passed into law to fully reauthorize this important restoration program.

In a minute I will get into why it is important and positive and noteworthy. Let me mention in passing its significance to me. It happened to be the first bill I ever passed in Congress. I came to the U.S. House in a special election in 1999, and very soon after that we passed into law in my freshman term this legislation in 2001. More important, it has been a very positive, productive program cleaning up a big part of Louisiana and parts of Mississippi.

The Lake Pontchartrain Basin is about 16 parishes in Louisiana, four counties in Mississippi and southeast Louisiana. Lake Pontchartrain and the areas surrounding Lake Pontchartrain are the most populated part of our State—at least 1.5 million residents.

When I was a kid, unfortunately Lake Pontchartrain had come into a sad state and was visibly dirty. Nobody would have thought of swimming there at the time. Soon after that, however, a positive grassroots effort started to clean up the lake. It wasn't some big government program, it wasn't some edict from the EPA or anyone else. It was a grassroots citizens effort. It was embodied by a great organization that was founded and still exists: the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation. That nonprofit, private foundation, that group of active citizens and stakeholders got together around the need to clean up the lake and make it a suitable lake once again and clean up all the surrounding parishes in that watershed.

That effort had great success from when I was in high school for the next several decades. Then, as I was coming to the Congress, we wanted to take the next step and amplify those efforts. So with an enormous amount of input from that citizens group and other local stakeholders, we came up with a

model, a completely voluntary, proactive cleanup effort housed in the EPA focused exclusively on the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. That is when we acted, 1999 and 2000, and passed that legislation in 2001.

It has had an enormously positive impact. It created a real partnership—again, built from the ground up, from local stakeholders, from that local group of civic activists—and it generated restoration efforts, similar statuses, and other important restoration efforts around the country, and over the last many years it has had real impact.

As Carlton Dufrechou, then head of the Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Executive Committee, said:

It's been the catalyst for over 100 projects that have reduced pollution from sewage plants, dairy operations, and helped preserve Louisiana's fragile coast. And the results are quantifiable. Lake Pontchartrain is again fishable and swimmable.

That is really the ultimate test. That is the ultimate measure, when citizens can go out and swim in the lake as they can now; when they can go out and actively fish in the lake in a way they never did to that extent a decade and two decades ago. That is the ultimate validation. That is the ultimate measure.

We did reauthorize the program in 2006. Now, in 2012, we are reauthorizing it, basing it on the same continuing model, a from-the-ground-up enterprise, a proactive voluntary effort; not some Washington bureaucrat throwing a huge cumbersome rule book at local stakeholders but building from the ground up through voluntary proactive restoration efforts, getting those stakeholders together, the people who know the lay of the land the best, and acting based on their priorities and their recommendations.

That was the model from the beginning. That was the model before this legislation, with the grassroots effort that preceded it and that continues. That is the model we will continue to use. I hope, in some small way, that can be the model we use more and more actively in environmental cleanup around the country. Certainly, that is the positive perspective I will bring as the new ranking Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee.

So I again thank my colleagues—Democrats and Republicans—for passing this reauthorization. It is important and productive and positive and will continue to be on the ground in southeast Louisiana.

I very much look forward to that reauthorization passing the U.S. House and being signed into law so that those activists and stakeholders and citizens on the ground in southeast Louisiana can help lead that important continuing work.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING DANIEL K. INOUE

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise for a few moments to share a few thoughts about our friend and colleague who passed away yesterday, Senator DAN INOUE. It was a shock to me here on the floor yesterday when his passing was announced and it is still a shock today to see that it is indeed real—the beautiful bowl of white roses on his desk.

I want to share a remembrance or two. When I was 19 I was struggling with what direction to take in life and thought public policy might be something worth pursuing. I asked my father. My father read the newspaper every day and watched the evening news and would run a commentary on the world. I asked him, if I were to try to get a summer internship in Washington, DC, to see how government really works, who should I apply to. Of course he noted I should apply to my home State Senators, Senator Packwood and Senator Hatfield. I asked him if there were any national Senators who stood out. He said there are four I think you should try to talk to: Senator Kennedy, Senator Humphrey, Senator Church, and Senator INOUE.

I proceeded to write letters to see if I could get an internship with any of my home State Senators or any of those four. I did not succeed outside my State. I did get an internship with Senator Hatfield, which changed the course of my life. But when I was elected to the Senate, Senator Hatfield asked me to bring greetings to his old colleagues, those who served with him, particularly Senator INOUE, because Senator Hatfield had chaired Appropriations and Senator INOUE was chairing Appropriations. That was a tremendous introduction because it led to one of my first conversations with Senator DAN INOUE when I came to the Senate. He showed me his spectacular view down The Mall, looking toward the Washington Monument, and said anytime you want to come and use the balcony you should come and use it. It is one of the best places in Washington.

We shared the joy he took in just the beauty of that space. We shared stories about the old days, the days when Senator Hatfield and Senator INOUE worked together on appropriations. We also had a chance to talk about some of the challenges that have occurred in the committee. In recent times, we discussed how much harder it is to get appropriations bills to the floor and have them considered in a bipartisan nature.

I indicated to Senator INOUE at that time how interested I was in serving on the Appropriations Committee and how